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Something Wicked This Way Comes — Adding the Magic 4

Culminating a gestation period which spanned nearly a quarter of a century, Ray Bradbury's chilling fantasy novel, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, has at last materialized on the screen under the Disney banner. Ray Bradbury and director Jack Clayton discuss the origin and evolution of the project, while effects supervisor Lee Dyer — assisted by seven key department heads — details the elaborate mechanical and optical effects, makeup, miniatures, matte paintings and computer animation that transformed the film in postproduction. *Article by Brad Munson.*

Stop-Frame Fever, Post-Animation Blues 28

After a short-lived resurgence in *Clash of the Titans* and *Caveman*, the venerable old art of stop-motion animation has slipped once again into the role of supporting performer, struggling for a foothold among the superstar effects technologies of the day. Animators David Allen, Randall William Cook and Steven Archer discuss their respective efforts — successful and otherwise — at adding stop-motion moments to such recent and forthcoming productions as *The Howling*, *Q*, *The Thing*, *The Hunger* and *Krull*. *Article by Paul Mandell.*

A Dream in the Making 50

From humble beginnings in a residential garage, Dream Quest has grown — in three short years — into one of the most highly respected effects facilities in the business. A close partnership comprised of six pre-dominantly young, but seasoned professionals, the Dream Quest principals — Scott Squires, Rocco Gioffre, Hoyt Yeatman, Robert Hollister, Tom Hollister and Frederick Iguchi — recount their evolution as a company, their ancillary work on such projects as *Escape from New York*, *E.T.*, and *One from the Heart*, their first solo outing on *Blue Thunder*, and their prospects for the future. *Article by Marc A. Richardson.*

FRONT COVER — The evil Dust Witch from *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.
The giant crystal spider approaches her cocoon in *Krull* — BACK COVER.

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Adding the Magic



Animators Scott Russo and Michael Wolf discuss with Clint Colver one of the pivotal scenes in the library where Mr. Dark tempts Halloway with promises of restored youth. As he metaphorically rips pages from a book, each leaf flares with a startling unearthly glow. The effect was achieved entirely through postproduction animation. / Gale Fox, working from frame enlargements of Jason Robards, determines appropriate placement of interactive lighting effects. / Airbrush artwork was generated for those areas of the image which would normally be expected to glow if the pages actually flared. / With a flourish, Dark (Jonathan Pryce) rips a page

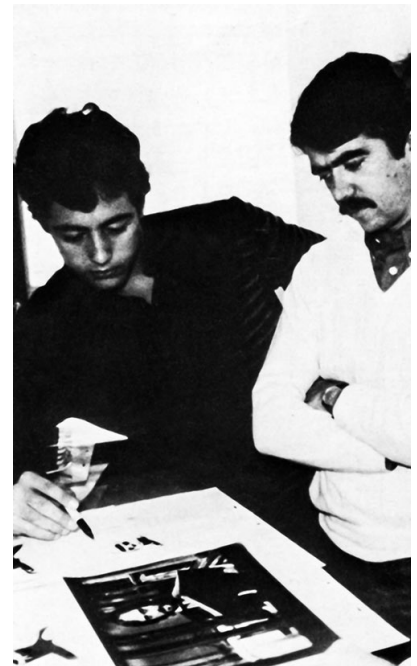
For the current version, Lee Dyer and his crew animated a series of frighteningly powerful lightning bolts. But at one point, long before the special effects crew was called in, a Tesla static electricity generator was actually constructed to produce the effect. "They made a tin-foil dummy of Fury," Clint Colver recalled, "set him in his chair and hooked him up to a Tesla generator. They got static electricity going on him, and did a number of takes on it. But for some reason, the real thing ended up looking worse than animation. It was too much — it was all over him. With animation, you have much more control. We could locate sparks at the switch, and on the manacles of his hands, and fit it all in with the shots better."

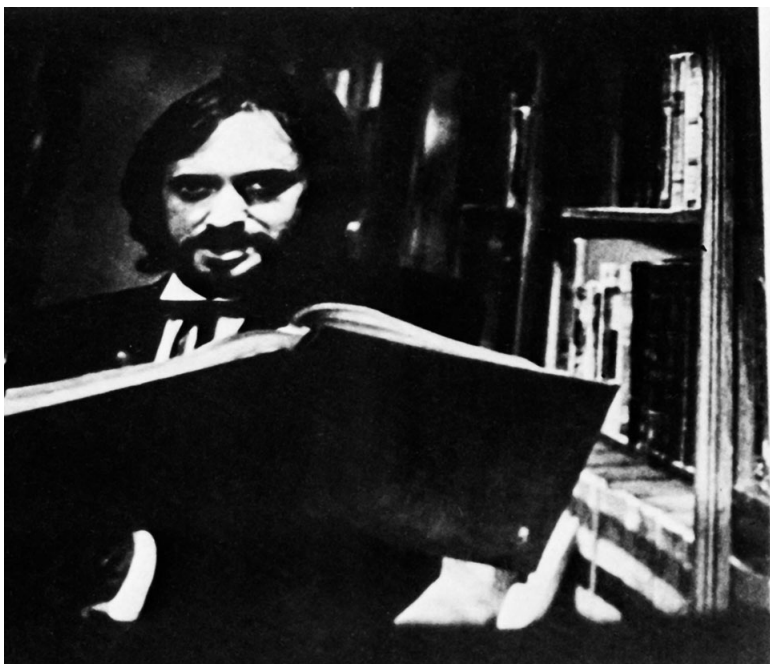
Dyer agreed, rejecting the Tesla footage outright. "They'd spent a great deal of time and money building it and shooting it and trying to put it in over the live-action. Of course it didn't work. Then they went to an outside animation house and somebody there animated it — I think, four different times — and the effects were absolutely atrocious. The electricity crawled all over Fury in lines. It was terrible." The electrocution effects were among the first things to be redone on the Disney lot.

Meanwhile, there was the affair of the mechanical hand — another sequence that had gone through a number of changes. In Bradbury's original story, the two boys are stalked by the evil and hideously ugly Dust Witch, who sends out huge snails to mark the roof of their houses so she can find them when she floats above Green Town in her hot air balloon. But that image was eliminated even before the first script was completed. Bradbury was disappointed, but he took it well. "Everyone seemed afraid to try to fly the Dust Witch over the house; and past a certain point you have to respect your director, and say: 'Okay, what else can we do where you'll feel more secure?' There's no way to guarantee that, if we did it my way, it would work out and not turn us into laughing stocks."

The second attempt, then, was to design and build a huge mechanical hand, something on the order of the famous ape's paw in *King Kong*. The boys would huddle in their bedroom, listening to heavy footfalls scratching on the roof — and then see the giant fingers scrabbling at the window. Once again, the idea simply didn't work. "The mechanical hand looked absurd," Dyer remarked. "Jack Clayton saw that. And Pam Grier was in for one day, and she said, 'My hand is better than that.' She pulled up her sleeve, and it's true. Her hand is extremely long and about an inch around at the wrist. It would have worked just as well. It was an embarrassment, this hand." Jack Clayton himself called it "appalling" — but he had an alternative. The sequence would be replaced by an entirely new one in which an army of tarantulas would invade the boys' rooms.

Meanwhile Dyer and Clayton and the others tried to concoct a more fitting and comprehensive concept for the Dust Witch. "She's a very weird creature in the novel," Bradbury confessed.







far," he commented. "Now, instead of Disneyish, she's beautiful — because she's erotic and, above all, tempting. She's the Beautiful Woman in the World. But occasionally and the kids will see what she is, an ugly creature."

Easier said than done. Bob Schiffer, the production of the film, had worked long and hard on the Dust Witch, with only limited success in making different changes of concept on Pam. Winston created over thirty widely varying faces for the Dust Witch could reveal in her climactic scene. All were put aside. "Clayton wanted a walnut shell. No eyes, no nose — not a walnut shell — just a thing to fit over the face."

It didn't work. As the special effects team worked on the project, Schiffer's concept drawing from them a new image was taken — an alluring, frighteningly arid face that would hide the face of the witch. But there simply wasn't the time or the money to make a lengthy makeup session. Lee Dyer's unit was called in.

Whole sequences, then, eventually ended up on the room floor: the Tesla generator's lightning-bolting mechanical hand, the successful but ugly witch with a walnut face. But the visual was retained, and required something that was more important — a means, graphic or otherwise, to get together the disparate story elements that a creative combination of animation, mattes, and composites like miniatures and mechanical models could answer. "One thing about special effects," Dyer commented, "is that they come across as something you had to deal with before, and they figure out. It's all seat-of-the-pants. That's where it's at."

Dyer, too, saw the goal as imparting a clarity to the use of special effects. "The problem is," he said, "is that you have to be graphic in your use of special effects, instead of just implying things." On the ultimate role of Tom Fury. "In the coming to town, and the kids buy a lightning rod and put the lightning rod on the roof, and again. There's really no reason for all this a similar problem in the climactic scene

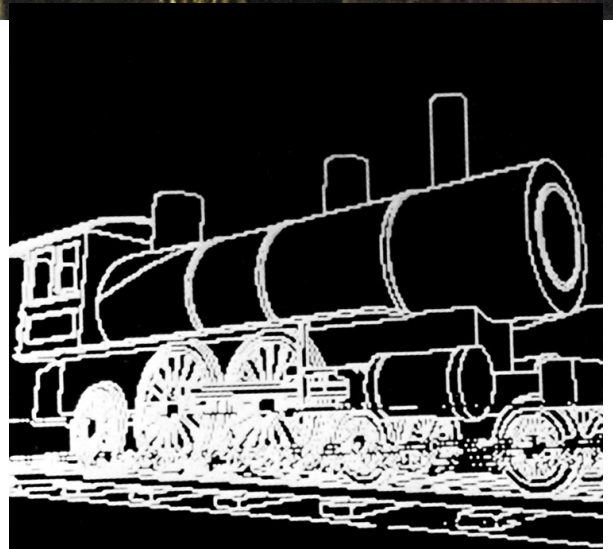


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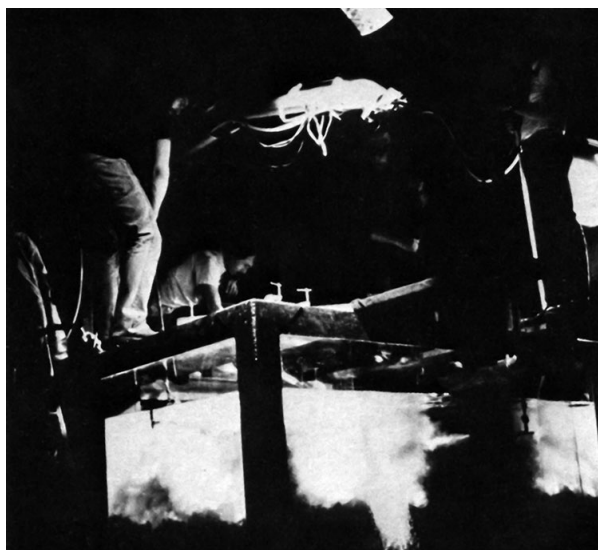
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Clearly, the special effects highpoints in the film’s original cut were the masterful makeup creations of Bob Schiffer. An Academy Award winner for his realistic aging of Burt Lancaster in *Birdman of Alcatraz*, makeup artist on the first color film ever and a renowned authority on beauty makeup as well, Schiffer brought vast experience and enthusiasm to *Something Wicked*.

Schiffer’s most impressive sequence is the accelerated aging of Mr. Dark — trapped on his own carousel as he ages a year for every rotation on the evil machine. The actual sequence Clayton captured on film, however, is far different from that which Schiffer envisioned when first involved with the project. Not only did he create the required makeup applications for Jonathan Pryce’s face, and design and build a series of puppet heads that could complete Dark’s disintegration, he also created a series of storyboards that plotted the entire carousel sequence from beginning to end. It is another “lost” section of *Something Wicked* that, in this case, was never actually filmed at all.

“I made applications on Jonathan Pryce’s face to age and start disintegrating him — but they were very, very difficult. When you have a human face, it’s very hard to shrink it; it’s always much easier to make it larger. So after the first set of appliances, we sculpted a head — a false head — and the same physical appearance the human had was then transferred to the puppet head. From then on, in four stages, it was a puppet head that was disintegrating — as skeletal as hell. The hands were false, too.” There was something more Schiffer wanted to try, also. “I had a mixture of impression material and clay; and I wanted to take a skull and put a heating element in it, and then put this mixture over it, coating the skull and modeling it into a more or less human face. Then, through time-lapse photography, over a time we would see the material bake and crack and the flesh would just peel and fall away slowly. They never did that. The director just wanted them to carry the body away and have a leg fall off.”

Ultimately, Schiffer’s storyboards and experimental techniques were never used, and the sequence itself was postponed until principal photography was virtually complete. “I don’t think Clayton ever believed we could make the transference from a human head to a puppet head and not recognize it. The carousel and everything was about to be dismantled when they finally decided to shoot the disintegration scene. I had all these heads lined up — all laid out the way to go — when Clayton saw the heads working, really *working* for the first time. Then he got



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the movie, when Halloway is trapped in the carnival's mirror maze and tormented by Mr. Dark. The concept itself had been in from the beginning, but like a number of equally complex and troublesome sequences, was not entirely successful in its execution. "The whole point of it," Dyer said, "is that Will almost drowned years ago, and was saved by Mr. Nightshade because Halloway can't swim. That's never resolved. It's resolved in a talk between father and son, but it's never really resolved in Halloway's mind. We wanted him to relive this in the mirror maze and resolve it, once and for all." The scene had purely visual problems as well. "The original breaking of the mirrors didn't work at all. The glass they used was safety glass that they set off with charges. It just crumbled." There were a number of old men, supposedly living mirror images of Jason Robards grown old, used as well.

"We tried to put it together," Dyer continued, "and became frustrated because we simply couldn't make it work. We didn't plan on bringing Jason Robards back to begin with; but the mirror maze was a big problem, so we had to. We just couldn't go in and hook up footage with existing footage. We thought the best thing to do was redo the entire sequence." To do it the way it needed to be done meant starting virtually from scratch — a fairly complex proposition that began shortly after Dyer and his crew took up the project. To help suggest appropriate action and camera angles, a four-foot test miniature of the mirror maze was first pieced together. Then the full-size structure — employing thirty-two individual panels of mirrored glass, each almost seven feet tall — was constructed on one of the Disney stages and sheathed in thick black cloth to block out extraneous light. "We had an entrance of a long corridor, and then a circular-type room," Dyer said. "My original intent was to bring huge shafts of light down through smoke, and you wouldn't know where they emanated from or where they went to. But I was afraid of making it look too much like a disco. So I talked to John Mansbridge (head of the Disney art department) and asked him if he had any oval mirrors in stock. He said he had a couple, but we needed eighteen mirrors in all. So I said, 'Let's take construction board and cut ovals and put them over our own mirrors,' because I think ovals give you that feeling of the Thirties, like Tiffany glass. He cut them for me, and we put them on. It was a perfect motif in that part of the mirror maze." In that fragment of the scene, Halloway is directed to look into different mirrors by Mr. Dark's disembodied voice — recorded in early 1983, in a one-day pickup session with Jonathan Pryce. As Halloway looks, the image of Crosetti, and then other villagers trapped in the maze, are superimposed on different mirrors. Then, when Halloway moved

At the end of the movie, Mr. Dark falls. The evil character is skeletal: former's responsibility transforms with mathematics. Then the series of heads with eyes covered remotely in aging beneath of his car. Somehow



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bundled up in coats and parkas throughout the day. Camera movement was greatly restricted because of the tricky angles that the mirrors-on-mirrors presented. "We used fifty-fifty mirror for the camera," Dyer recalled, "but you still couldn't truck. It was all locked down. We did put the camera on tracks at one time, but you could see its reflection in the mirrors." What's more, the necessarily tiny cubicle for the camera was barely big enough to hold the operator. "Only two people could be inside. Clayton had to direct many times without even seeing what was happening. There were times he could be on a ladder looking over the top — in spots where we wouldn't pick up a reflection — but there were several scenes where he would literally have to watch the camera move and call 'action' and hope that he gave the right direction to the actors."

The breaking of the mirrors posed a problem, too. "Rather than have the pulverized look of safety glass," said Dyer, "I wanted the glass to come out at you from the left, the right, the back — pieces of it, shattering in shards." Rather than risk flesh and blood, Dyer called on Bob Schiffer to produce two artificial hands to break through the glass. The final effect was achieved by having the false hands plunge into the glass that covered a pool of water topped with a few inches of mineral oil. "Mineral oil is heavier — it makes a better splash. And we overcranked, so it looks very much like glass."

The shattering of the mirror brings the sequence — and quite nearly the film — to a close. Halloway is tormented by Dark, and eventually shown the vision of his own son, drowning in the river years ago. Dark's words remind him of his painful failure, but this time Halloway *does* help. He thrusts his hands through the glass, into the water beyond. "He actually makes contact with the water on the other side, then he goes on further to help Will," Dyer explained. "He pulls him through. He saves his son. So Halloway, as an old man, becomes the hero of the story; and through his attempt to save Will, he in fact breaks the mirror maze. It totally collapses, and at that point Dark becomes aware that the storm has finally come and the whole destruction starts to take place."

That destruction — in which Dark's evil carnival is swept up in a single twisting column of smoke and lightning — proved to be another major challenge for the special effects team. More than the film's climax, it is a climax of combined special effects, utilizing mattes, cel animation, miniatures, cloud tank effects and all the special sounds that Richard Portman could muster. The task of coordinating the construction, photography and destruction of the carnival miniature fell to Harrison Ellenshaw, co-

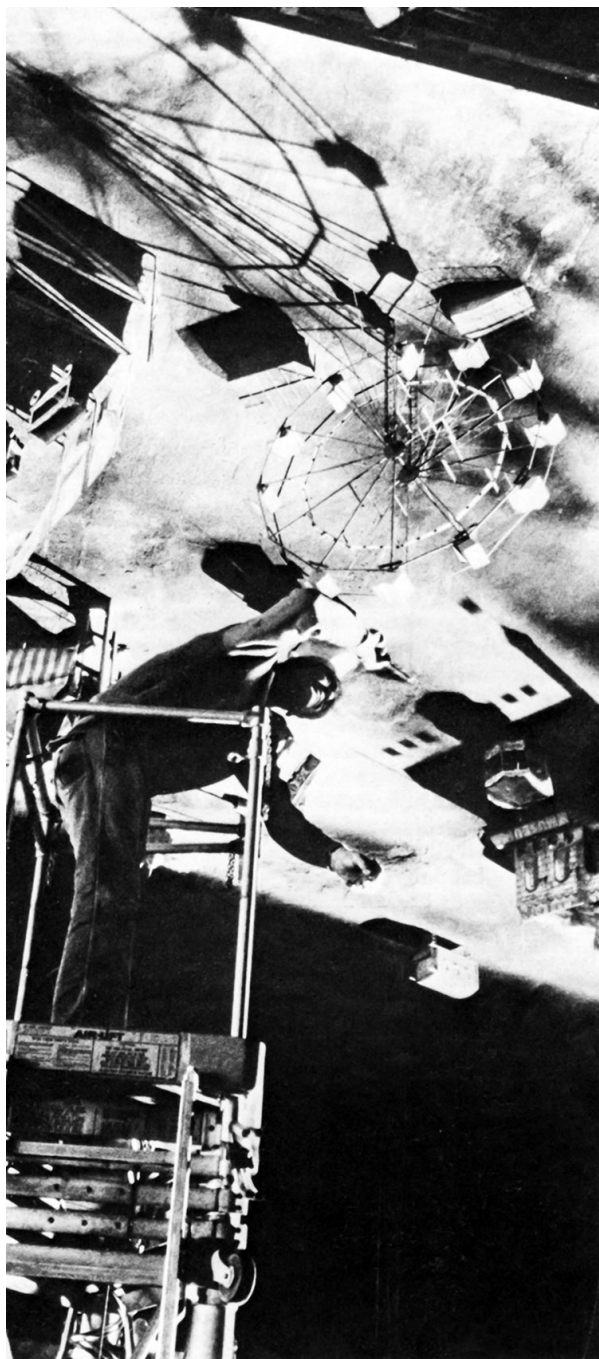
Effects technician Robert Means works on one of three miniature ferris wheels constructed for the film. / For several nighttime establishing shots, the twenty-by-twenty-foot carnival miniature was photographed against a painted backdrop. / To effect the climactic holocaust in which the carnival is sucked up into the clouds, the miniature set pieces were mounted upside-down and released sequentially from the inverted platform. Painter Ray Barone provides last-minute touch-up work. / Miniature



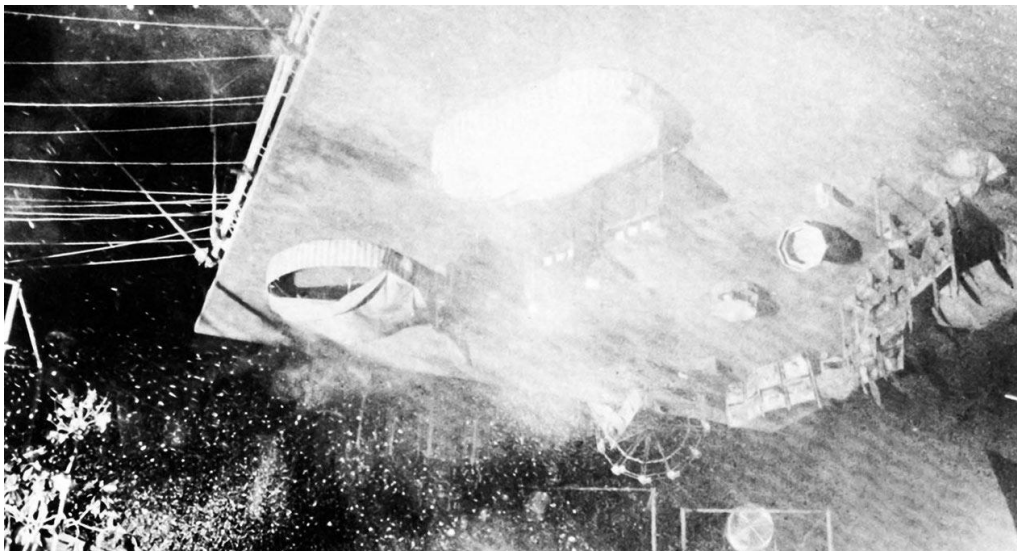
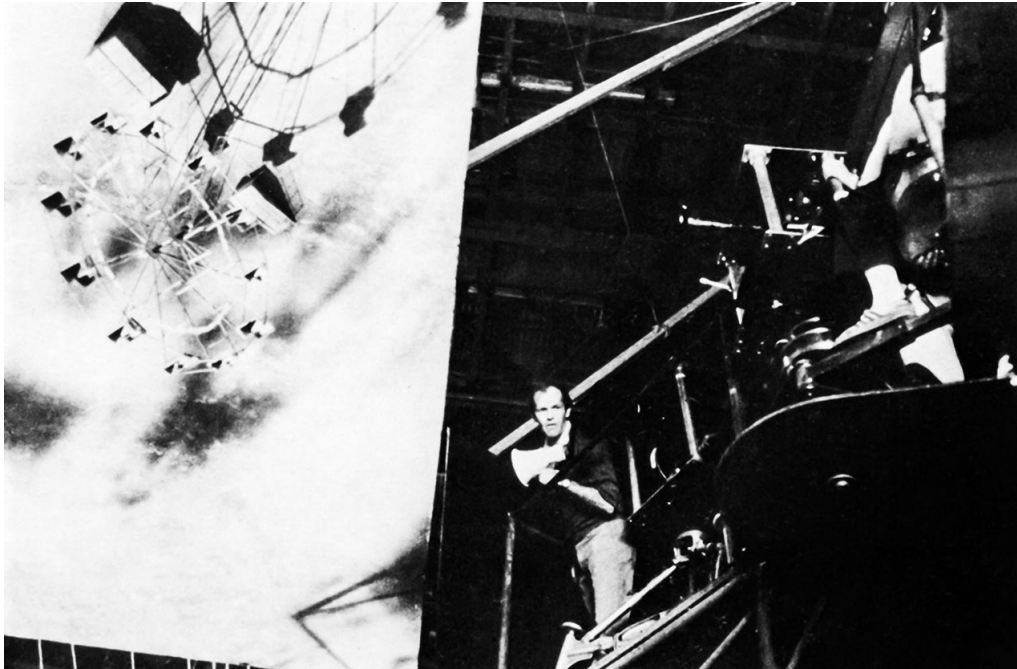
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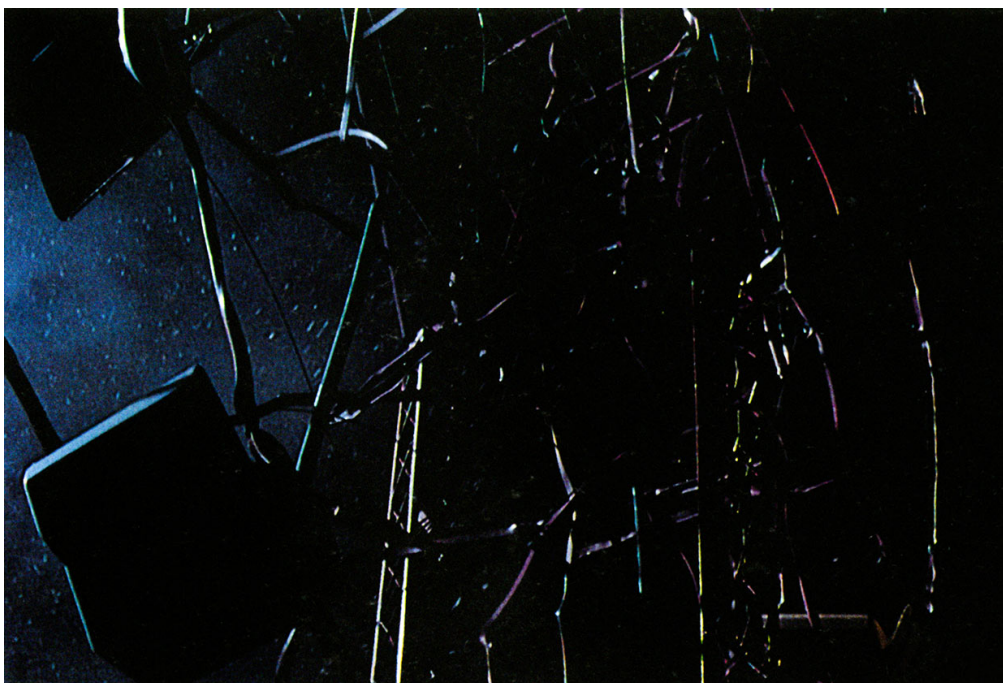
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they're not highly detailed enough. Then of reasons, but generally it's not that Ellenshaw remembered with some disco beautiful, detailed models he had seen that of bright lights and blotted out. Instead, Dennis Muren of Industrial Light and Magic worked on *The Empire Strikes Back* with miniatures. He spends a great deal of shot very, very carefully. If he has to, he'll half setting the shot up and doing tests."

Ron Tantini and Isadore Rapin actually of the miniature carnival — which had to be of the full-size set. "We had a little perspective reference photos," Tantini confessed, "but dead-on front views of all the facades. With foreshortened pieces, and we did half from the actual sets. It was a matter of redrawing what we wanted and comparing the picture to the

Even choosing that scale for the four miniatures and various other carnival set-pieces was have to have a certain size for the miniature served, "but the problem is you don't want Obviously, the bigger it is the more expensive: unwieldy." Eventually, a one-inch to one foot upon, and the construction work commenced originally hoped to shoot some covering when the full twenty-by-twenty-foot miniature the complications involved in moving it out to contemplate, so all the shots were done of course, required a scenic backdrop behind had to have a backing big enough to cover wanted the sky to be lighter than parts of the — if you go out at night and look at the moon at night, the mountains are black and the sky got to have a backing big enough — which to get too large with the miniature. As it went across and went up to the top of the sound feet. And it's a chunk to light, too. You've got light in there to hold focus; and you've got miniature, or what you get is like the open *Neighborhood*. Those are the miniatures."

An extensive photo file gave them most of the miniature's final look — with the photographing in hand in a different and unexpected facades are photographs," said Tantini. "The stills that we took the perspective out of them. Then we flattened out the prints and pasted them. It worked really well." The paint department up any irregularities or inconsistencies. The carnival tents and attractions. Tantini and



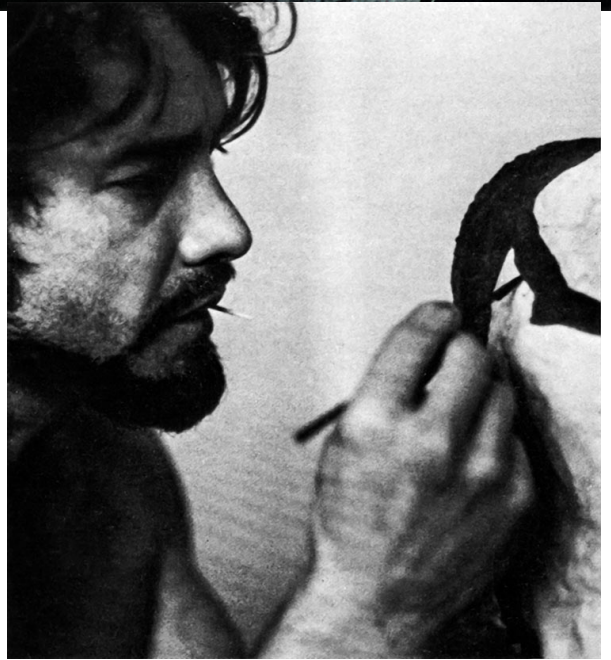
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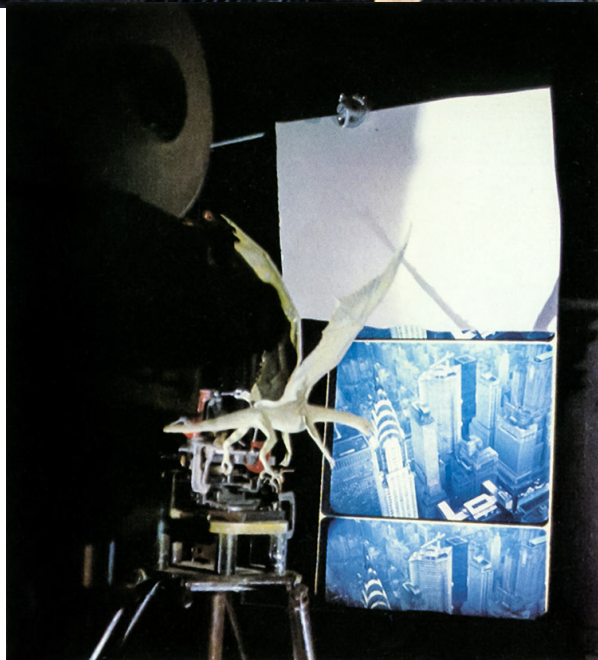
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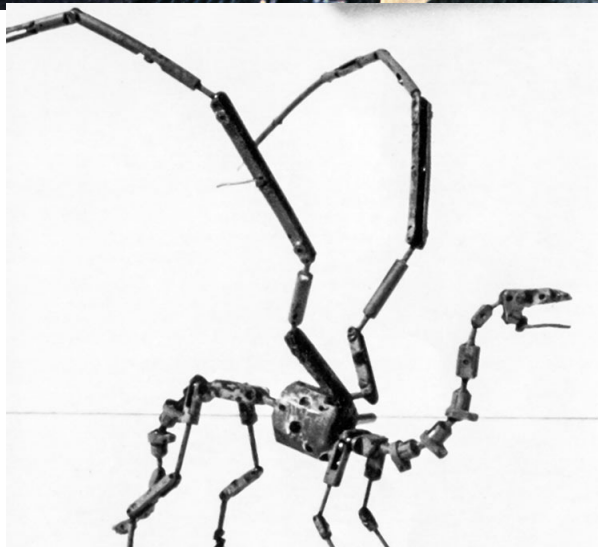


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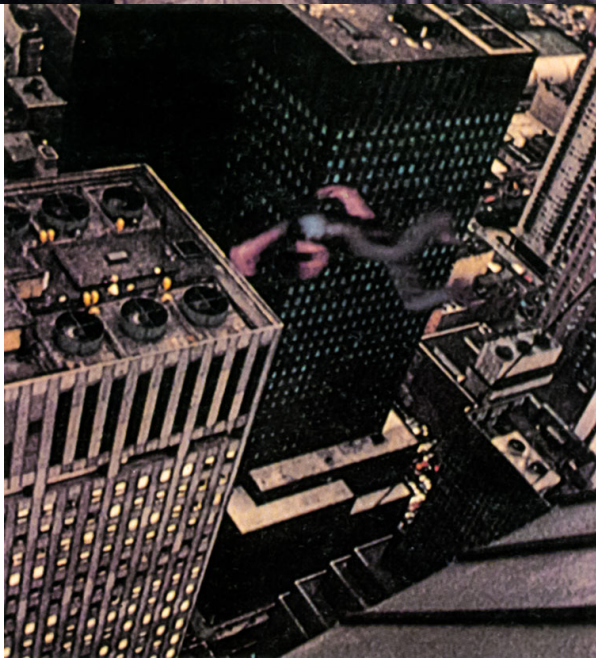
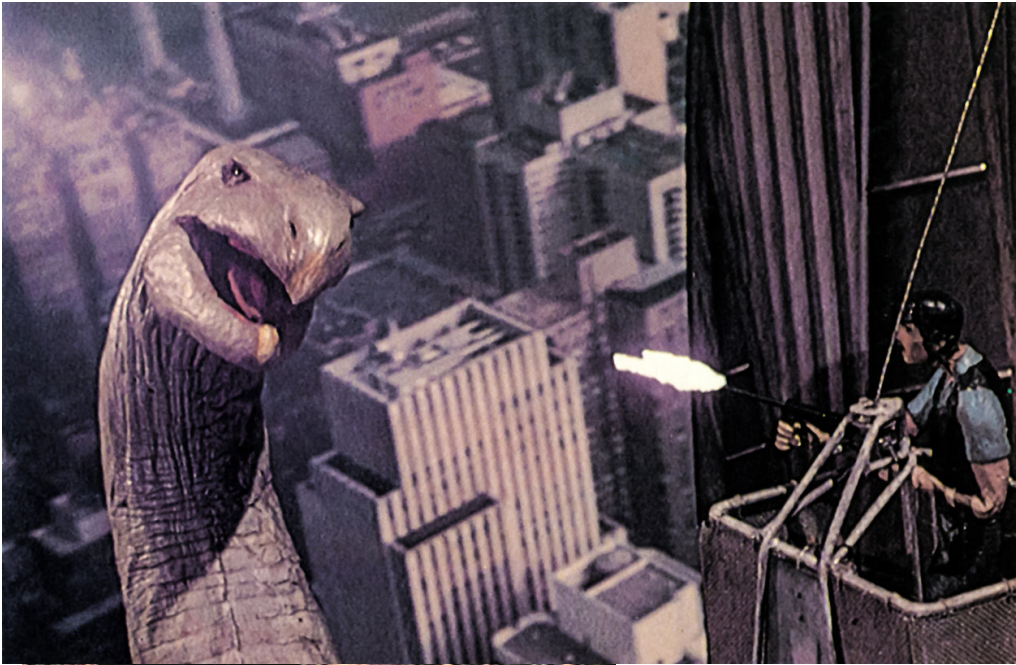
Effects for front- and backlight shots. But when it was determined that Larry Cohen wanted a shot of the bird flying *behind* the Chrysler Building, I introduced him to Pete Kuran, who did a very good roto on the side of the building once we found a section that was steady enough. Not surprisingly, Pete likes to remain in touch with the whole job after he's completed his part of it. He has a separate optical company that he uses, and he felt he could put the whole shot together, rather than deliver elements to Dick Bond. Because Pete's work is always so immaculate, I trusted his sense of taste. The wedges looked mostly okay, but to my astonishment, the shots looked totally different. There were all kinds of optical problems. Apparently the people who processed them were attempting to be creative and they elected to do tonal mattes instead of just working from hi-con. However, that raised problems they were never quite able to solve. Larry Cohen approved it, though — so I was kind of caught. But the one shot that Dick did of the serpent hanging onto the building with the people looking up was perfect. It was unfortunate that he didn't do them all."

Pete Kuran nonetheless did some inventive work for *Q*, including a cel-animated shadow of the serpent strafing the Manhattan skyscrapers, which is entirely convincing. He also incorporated animated rifle fire effects into the SWAT sequence, giving rather dead scenes some added life. Randy Cook spiced up a few of his own scenes by reflecting gunshots into the process work with a two-way mirror arrangement, introducing it into the photography rather than going to opticals and sacrificing another generation. Dennis Gordon constructed several impressive miniatures, including the gutted attic nesting spot for the end scene — built on a four-by-eight foot table — and a three-foot miniature of the Chrysler Building tower for the bluescreened animation. For the scene of the men hanging from their work baskets, Gordon created a forced perspective model of the Chrysler Building, thereby eliminating the problems of carrying focus and accidental collision with the process screen.

In Allen's opinion, the most successful scene in the picture is that of the baby serpent emerging from the egg. The grotesque fledgling was actually a hand puppet built by Steve Neill, shot on two separate nights. Dennis Gordon fabricated the two-foot egg. Randy Cook puppeteered the creature from beneath a table, and Dave Allen shot it from the loft of his studio ceiling. "We actually did one stop-motion shot with the hand puppet," Allen revealed. "It's the only composite shot where you see the baby bird and the people in the same scene. That was done by advancing the projection and having Randy move his hand a bit. We pixilated it and it worked fine. A large bird shell had been built for the live-action, but we just eclipsed it with our model."

The all-too-familiar cutting room scenario that sealed the fate







that occasionally plague animation puppets.

Six weeks of miniature set construction transpired, the work of Susan Turner and assistant James Belohovek. Well-versed in both cel and stop-motion animation, Turner was already on the project when Randy Cook was hired, having previously designed and constructed the film's saucer-like spaceship under the aegis of Peter Kuran at Visual Concept Engineering. "They gave me a portion of an existing full-size set that I had to duplicate," Turner explained, "and they wanted it to be totally realistic. I did it on a two-and-a-half-inch scale, at Randy's request. Taking a four-by-eight foot piece of flat foam, I started digging into it, creating the basic shape of the miniature set. It was very difficult trying to copy something like an ice cave. I set it up on a four-by-eight foot plywood framework so Randy would be comfortable standing in front of it during his animation. Fortunately, I had a lot of cooperation from the art director, John Lloyd, who described the functional aspects of the full-scale set. That helped me a great deal."

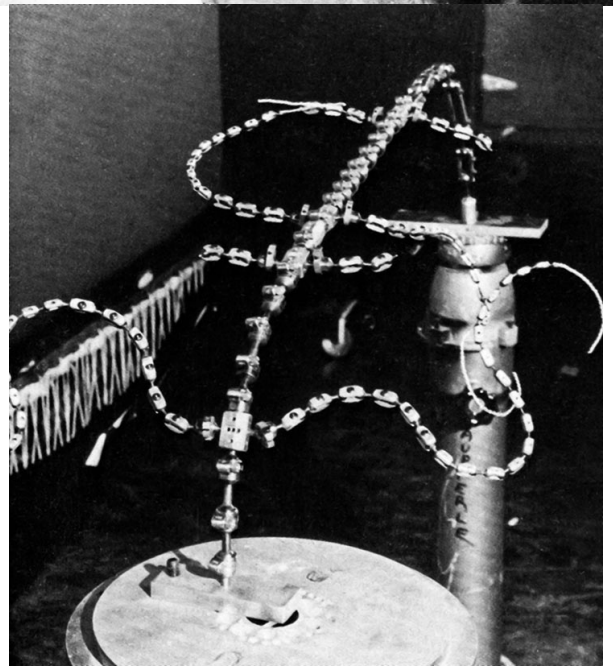
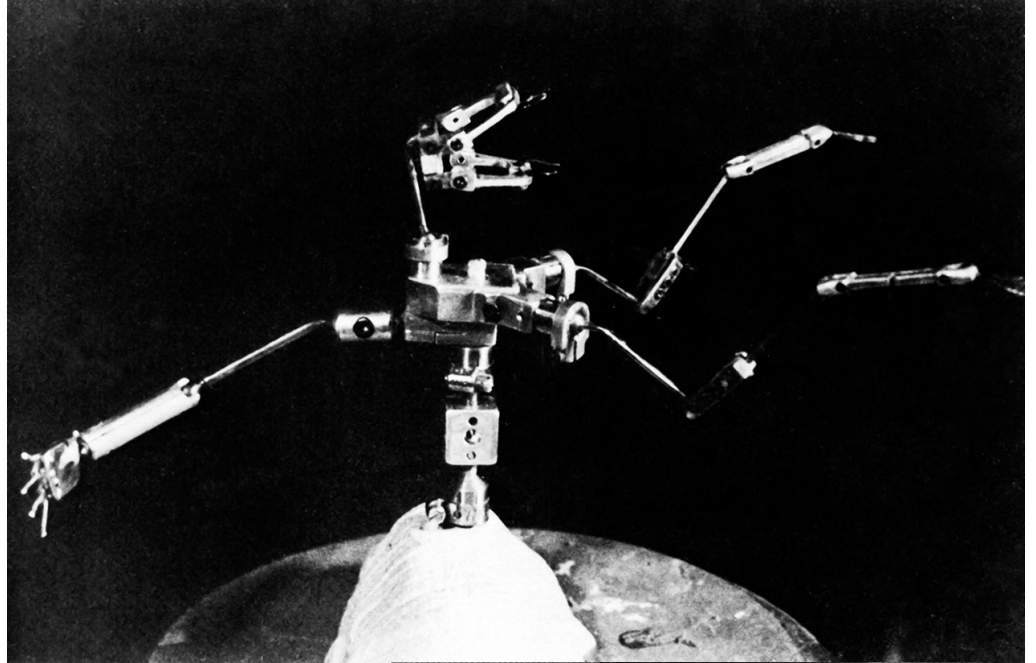
Plaster was used for a stable animation surface, and props — including tiny Molotov cocktails — were baked from sculpey and casting resin. Dozens of barrels were fashioned from cardboard tubing, and special attention was given to a miniature lantern, deciding what color it should be and whether it would cast a natural shadow or use a painted one. "I had to build the entire set before anyone knew exactly where the hole would be for the tentacles to come through," Turner continued, "and since I already had all the miniature barrels in place, I had to be very careful that everything didn't collapse when I was cutting the hole out."

For his cameraman, Cook chose James Aupperle, whose prior experience with lighting stop-motion setups in such films as *Planet of the Dinosaurs* and *Caveman* made his hiring essential. At first, Aupperle spent most of his time devising an overall lighting scheme for the entire set — one that would work almost everywhere, as Cook hadn't yet decided on his shots. Once that was done and the camera angles were locked in, Aupperle's major concern was creating a miniature representation of flickering firelight, which had to match perfectly the pattern and intensity of the live-action production footage. "I'd study trims and outs from the sequence and basically figure out the highs and lows of it. There were several tests just to get the flickering down, and a few more to give it some atmospheric perspective. They had used a lot of smoke in the live-action, which tended to grey out the shadows. To match that, I had to find the right combination of low contrast filters. We didn't shoot any smoke into the miniature set, though. We thought about it, but it would've taken a lot of time to build a smoke-filled environment on one of Hartland's larger stages."

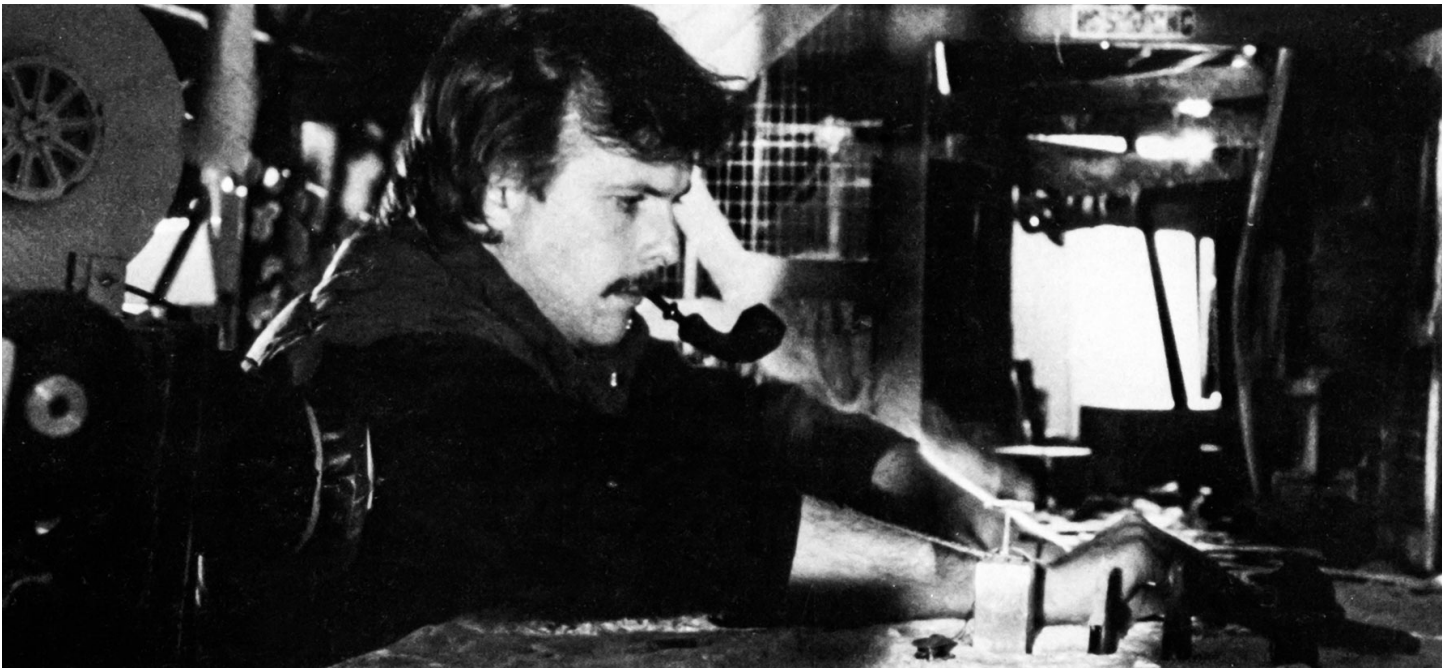
Aupperle discovered that the firelight effect on the live-action photographs was achieved by varying the voltage on a power-

Stop-motion supervisor Randall William Cook adds detail and color to the half-man, half-insect Blairmonster torso designed for The Thing. / The base upon which the torso rested was a large wormlike body with smaller tentacles extending from it. / Ernie Farino's armature for the tentacled understructure. / Constructing the head and torso armature was particularly taxing — not only because of its inherent complexity, but also because it violated nature's basic rules of symmetry. The dog, made to burst from the creature's stomach, required yet another fully-realized armature. / The Blairmonster — placed in Susan Turner's miniature replica of the ice cave set — was photographed by cameraman James Aupperle, who strove to duplicate the lighting employed in the full-size





CINEFEX 1





gest withering during animation. Then, at a certain point, I could cut it, the lead being laminated in between. From there, I could pull it back like tin foil and reveal the inside — sort of a stylized abstraction of the way something actually disintegrates. In fact, most real disintegration occurs with the hair almost mummifying over the corpse. But I didn't want to have a situation where the thing just withered with the fur gluing up next to the bone — especially knowing that I'd still have to get rid of it somehow. So, during the shot, the fur was being cut away as well as being folded back." Once the internal structure was exposed, the muscles and ligaments, made of plastic urethane, were made to disintegrate and retreat by applying heat.

Pulling this shot off credibly was not merely a matter of picking away at the puppet at a steady pace. The fleshy parts of the face had to wither and change while the fur mummified at a certain rate. Allen realized that dissolves were needed to alter the head up to the point of it mummifying; and to do so, the head and body would have to be filmed in separate exposures for a certain frame count. "That was where the third camera setup came in. I made a matte and countermatte of the face area. Then I had a little rubber mask that could fit over the skull like a glove. The lead-backed head — the mummified face that the rubber turns into — could also slip over the skull. I then shot a lot of footage of just the face with the countermatte in place, took it away, and used a 4x5 camera so I could mark off all the main points of registration on the rubber face. Then the two masks were dissolved into each other. Once that was done, I removed the countermatte, backwound the camera, popped in the face matte and printed the monkey's body back in. When you come out of the dissolve, you're in a full exposure situation, with no mattes or dissolves. Originally the dissolve was two feet long, but the producers later extended it to four or five feet by doubling up on the frames in the printer. I did *another* dissolve where I slowly removed the color from the face. At first it was flesh colored; then it went to a blue-gray. That was also done within the matte. The matte was run soft so I could use the edges to feather out the lead-lined face and create the softness of the hairline."

Some of the skeletal parts were those of a real monkey obtained from a lab. When the parts were judged too small for the scale of the puppet, Allen cut them in half, drilled pins in the end of each bone and filled in the gaps with putty and bondo, extending them. He then took molds off the revised bones and cast them in a bicarbonated plaster that crumbles easily. These were used for the substitutions at the end of the scene, with Allen animating bits of the skeleton falling to the floor on wires and then dissolving the bicarbonated bones in, pulverizing them a frame at a time. "It became like a can of worms. You realized that you ought to be animating *everything*, which is almost mathematically impossible."

After spending nine grueling days aging a desiccated ape into nothingness, Dave Allen unloaded his three cameras and the

